

NORMA TALMADGE *in*
"The
Woman
Disputed"

"The Woman Disputed"



JOSEPH M. SCHENCK
presents

NORMA
TALMADGE

in

HENRY KING'S
production

*"The
Woman
Disputed"*

WITH

GILBERT
ROLAND

UNITED ARTISTS PICTURE

N

Dear Friend:

Perhaps you will remember with me the lovable Moonyen in "Smilin' Thru" and the vivacious "Kiki." I imagined then that two such characterizations would never again be created for me to bring to the screen. Then came the role of Mary Ann Wagner in "The Woman Disputed." Merely in the reading of the story I felt the glow of her personality. There came to me a tremendous desire to put this woman on the screen. To become a part of, and live with, every emotion that she experienced.

I visualized the intensity of her life. The all-absorbing manner in which she lived her daily, perturbed existence. Here was the very opposite of Moonyen and Kiki. And so I urged immediate production.

I have just seen the completed picture of "The Woman Disputed" and I find it difficult to convey to you the conflicting emotions it left with me. I thought the story a great one and I am sure the picture is.

Henry King directed. He gave the script a fine and appreciative interpretation. He brought to all of us in the cast an enthusiasm that naturally reflected itself in the picture. The sheer simplicity of his directorial hand is seen and felt in every scene of the picture. I do truly believe that he has made in "The Woman Disputed" a picturization that will be vividly remembered.

I cannot, without seeming inconsistency, go on to tell you of the innumerable qualities in the picture that makes all of us at the studio join with Mr. Schenck in saying that "The Woman Disputed" is a screen attraction that will please audiences everywhere.

I can only hope that your appreciation of my efforts will justify my pride in this offering.

Norma Talmadge



HENRY KING

The PLAYERS

MARY ANN WAGNER - - - - - NORMA TALMADGE
Paul Hartman - - - - - Gilbert Roland
Nika Turgenov - - - - - Arnold Kent
The Passer-by - - - - - Boris De Fas
Father Roche - - - - - Michael Vavitch
Otto Kreuger - - - - - Gustav Von Seyffertitz
The Countess - - - - - Gladys Brockwell
The Count - - - - - Nicholas Soussanin

Directed by
HENRY KING

Adapted for the screen by
C. GARDNER SULLIVAN

From the play by
DENNISON CLIFT

Art Direction by
WILLIAM CAMERON MENZIES

Photography by
OLIVER MARSH, A.S.C.

Technical Advisor
CAPT. MARCO ELTER

Wardrobe Manager
FRANK DONNELLAN

Assistant Director
ROBERT FLOREY

Film Editor
HAL C. KERN

The Story



FIVE PAST MIDNIGHT the clock on the Town Hall announced. The girl under the lamp post gave it a second glance.

There was something subtle and undefinable in the sultry midsummer air in that year of 1914.

Mary Ann Wagner loosened the scarf about her throat and moved on with a slow, feline grace. Her slender eager body swung her light clothes closer about her. There was courage in her befeathered hat, a sense of defiance in her attitude but her eyes were a little tragic. Eyes that seemed to ask was she destined to pass under one street lamp after another and on into shadows.

"People like us never get a chance," a man said bitterly. His voice startled her.

She gave him a sharp look. Used to sizing people up, she realized there was something odd about this man—Drug fiend?—Drunkard? She wasn't certain. Anyway he wasn't her type.

"Good night," she said and drifted away.

Stay out or go in? She shrugged her shoulders. Not very picturesque—that shabby room of hers but she turned towards it.

One flight—two flights—she continued on upstairs—then kicked the door of



NORMA TALMADGE



*Life is difficult for her—
embittered, hardened, she
tries to be defiant—but
in her eyes, there is a
longing for better things.*

her room open and searched about for a cigarette. Striking a match she was startled to see the man she had just left standing near her. The flame from the match emphasized the strange light in his eyes.

"What do you want?" she demanded bluntly.

He removed his hat courteously. "I only want to talk to you," he said in an apologetic voice but he closed the door.

She watched him, realizing for the first time that this man was neither a drug addict nor a drunkard. He was mad!

"I've found the way to escape," he informed her, his voice rising higher and higher. "Here," he went on giving her a card, "that's my nephew—I want you to notify him—"

A crafty, insane smile twisted his lips.

Mary had made her way to the door.

"Wait here," she said as though she were speaking to a child. "I'll be right back."

Once outside, she rushed down the stairs. Suddenly the report of a pistol rang through the house. Mary swayed against the banister rail. She knew it came from her room . . . knew . . . God, what a night. . . . She clutched at the card in her hand and stumbled downstairs to the telephone. Central seemed hours in giving her the number.

At last a voice at the other end.

"Tell Lieutenant Turgenov—important—ask him to come to the telephone!"

A servant's voice answered, "Certainly, Madame."

She could hear music, jazz and the high laughter of women, but no one came to the telephone.

At last a voice—"Yes?" it said rather sharply.

"Lieutenant Turgenov's uncle shot himself here in my house," Mary said, giving him the address.

"What!" the other voice demanded.

"For God's sake, come!" Mary begged.

"Immediately," the man answered and rang off.



Mary waited in the hallway outside of her room for the unknown man at the other end of the wire. Her breath came in gasps as though she had been running. She hardly heard what the concierge was saying. The women had gone into the room but Mary, horror-stricken by what had happened, was unable to move.





"Are you sure he's not hiding around here somewhere?"



"What's it to you, grandpa."





*She knew the shot
came from her
room . . . God,
what a night!*



A sharp knocking on the banister rail seemed to pierce her very being. A man's voice demanded, "Who telephoned?"

She looked down and saw two men staring at her.

"Up here," she managed to say. She felt helpless, trapped.

On they came until they stood opposite her. Young, good-looking, aristocratic men who lived in the world she had never entered. They returned her gaze coldly, then looked at each other. She read their expression—a streetwalker—what could you expect—their eyes telegraphed each other. They passed her and went into the bedroom. She followed them numb with fear.

"I didn't do it," she said brokenly, "I tried to stop him."

"Please, please!" she pleaded, "won't someone believe in me—just once?"

The man looked down at her and for a second seemed lost at what was in her eyes. A girl of her unquestioned profession with the eyes of a saint. He turned her towards the light and at that moment, Lieutenant Turgenov entered the room.

"Wait, Nika," the other man said, "I don't believe she had anything to do with it."

"The police will decide that," Nika answered.

The other man shook his head. "She wouldn't have a chance," he said, "we've got to convince the police."

Mary could hear the police tramping up the stairs. They seemed to be tramping on her heart. At last they reached her room.

"Your names, gentlemen, please," the Sergeant asked.

"I am Lieutenant Nika Turgenov of the Russian army and this is Lieutenant Paul Hartman of the Austrian army."

The Sergeant was sufficiently impressed. Giving them a quick, military salute, he said, "Does either of you know how this man met his death?"

"Yes, Sergeant, I can give you all the facts," Lieutenant Turgenov stated. "This man was my uncle. He was not himself. This girl telephoned us that he had come to her room and that he had threatened to kill himself. She met us in the hall. A moment later, we heard a shot. When we entered this room, we found my uncle had carried out his threat."

The Sergeant bowed, requested that they make a report at the Central Office within twenty-four hours and left the room.

Mary turned to Nika, "What can I say?" She made a pathetic, graceful gesture with her hands. "There is nothing that I can do for you and you have done so much for me."

Paul turned to her. "You had better go to some hotel until morning."

"There isn't a hotel that would take me in," she said bitterly.



*"Wait, Nika—I don't believe she
had anything to do with it."*



*"Let me go away,"
she begged.*

"You can stay at my house," Paul said impulsively. "I will go to spend the night with Lieutenant Turgenov."

"But I couldn't think of such a thing," Mary said.

Paul smiled at her, "It's settled—you're going," he said definitely.

And out of that strange experience, that bleak house, Mary Ann Wagner went at two in the morning into the apartment of a young Austrian officer whom she had known for less than an hour, and who was the first man in the world who had treated her with respect.

Weeks passed—weeks in which Mary could hardly believe in her good fortune. In her day dreams, she had never imagined such an existence.

She was awakened one August morning at four by the ringing of her telephone. It was Paul's voice at the other end, telling her that he had received orders to leave. She didn't stop to ask what it meant, "I'm coming right over," she said, and rang off.

He met her at the door, bewildered by the message that had been delivered to him. Could it be War? They both dreaded to face the issue.

"War?"

She swayed toward him. They suddenly clung to each other, his mouth on hers. It was their first kiss.

"Mary, I love you," he said, "say that you love me—say that you will marry me."

She clung to him, not knowing what to say. What was going to happen—War? With a woman's intuition, she sensed all its horrors, all its tragedies. She broke away, saying as she left his arms, "Downstairs, someone is trying to get in—go, my dear one, it may be for you."

Then she heard Nika's voice and wondered had he too got his orders. Nika was a Russian—this was serious—what was going to happen?

She went forward into the library.

"Mary—you here?" Nika said.

She caught the first notes of jealousy in his voice. There was a strange silence for a few moments, then Nika said, "It's *War* undoubtedly—what do you intend to do, Mary?"

"Remain here in Lemberg and work," she said simply.

Paul went to her and putting his arm about her, said, "Mary has just promised to marry me."



*"Don't let them
send me to prison."*



"My two Musketeers"

"God! No!" Nika cried in spite of himself. "Mary, I love you," he went on in a rush of words. "I've loved you every day—every minute from the first night I found you."

"You, Nika?" was all Mary seemed able to say.

"Nika," Paul said sharply, "Mary loves me."

"If she does," Nika shot back, "It's because you went behind my back."

"No!" Paul cried.

With a gesture of blind rage, Nika said, "You lie—you know damn well you do! She's your mistress—you can't deny it—I might have known—a woman like that—!"

"Nika, don't you dare say that!" Paul shouted.

"Listen, please, listen, both of you," Mary began.

The door slammed violently.

"Please don't hate me," was all Mary could say. She knew that she had broken up the friendship—knew that she had become the woman disputed between men.

There were tears in Paul's eyes. "Hate you?" he said, "I love you—I worship you."

Mary moved over to the window dreading the parting she knew to be inevitable. She turned and both their eyes were fixed on the clock. Far off she could hear the Cathedral bells entoning the call for early Mass.

Paul went to her and putting a plain gold ring on her finger said, "That was my mother's wedding ring, Mary." He took her in his arms.

The clock on the mantel-piece struck the hour of their parting.

For two years war surged through the country. Two flaming years in which human beings lived on hate and impoverished food.

Mary had become an ambulance driver. It was Paul she longed for but it was Nika who reached Lemberg first.

The Russians had captured the Austrian city and Lieutenant Turgenov, now Captain, was in charge. An order was posted on the walls of the city which read:

"WARNING TO ALL RESIDENTS OF LEMBERG—NO ONE WILL BE PERMITTED TO LEAVE THE CITY WITHOUT FIRST OBTAINING A SIGNED PERMIT FROM THE OFFICER IN COMMAND. DISOBEDIENCE OF THIS ORDER WILL BE IMMEDIATELY PUNISHABLE BY DEATH."

The afternoon of the day that this order had been given out, six people of different walks in life were brought into Captain Turgenov's headquarters. Mary, just behind a priest, was the last one to enter.

She saw with astonishment that she was facing Nika Turgenov. She made an impulsive gesture as though to speak, but the words died on her lips as she caught the expression on his face. He was interrogating two peasants who refused to speak.

"The penalty for disobedience is—death." His voice was quick and judicial.

The men were taken out.





*There was courage
in her attitude—
but her eyes were
a little tragic.*

*"It's all too
wonderful
to last."*



*Mary succeeds
in her smart
little hat shop.*



"Please don't quarrel
over me."

Outside Mary heard the report of two shots and the dreadful falling of two bodies. The wings of death seemed to rustle close by. Those in the room with her shuddered. Mary leaned against the wall for support. Nothing was said.

Then the sergeant spoke, "Mary Ann Wagner."

Mary saw Nika start.

She moistened her lips and said, "Yes, Nika," but her smile faded under his stare.

Nika turned to the Lieutenant, "Take all the others out—keep them under guard."

The Lieutenant led them from the room.

"Wait," Captain Turgenov said to Mary, "I want to talk to you."

She felt the threat in his manner, but did her best to conceal her rising fear.

"What do you intend to do with me—with all of us?"

"That depends entirely on you," he said definitely. "All of you," he went on, "merit death. I could free you, of course, but I will only do it on one condition—you once went to Paul willingly—I now ask the same favor. I will wait until eleven o'clock for your answer."

She started to leave the room when Nika's voice stopped her. "Will you do as I say?"

"No, Nika," she said. She walked out of the room and stood for a moment near the others.

As they turned to question her, she buried her face in her hands. She couldn't tell them.

"What is it—what's wrong with the fool?" she heard the Countess say.

Only the priest went to her.

"My child," he said, "you must tell me what the officer said to you."

She looked up at him for a moment and then away. She took one of his hands in hers and clasped it tightly.

"He wants me," she went on with averted eyes, "he will free us all if I will go to him."

"It will make very little difference to you one way or another," the old Countess murmured.

Another said, "She must be persuaded."

It was only the priest who said, "It is unthinkable."

Mary stared at them dully. Now they began smiling at her—fawning on her.

Strange that Life should throw the lives of these five people in her hands. What should she do? Better to die than go back to Paul dishonored.

"Well," said the Countess, "what are we going to do?"

(Continued on Page Fifty-one)





A girl of the streets . .

. . . with the eyes of a saint.



*Life seemed full of beauty
and sunlight to Mary.*



*"I love you—I want you
—just as you are."*



*War . . . she knew
all its horrors.*



*"My mother's wedding ring—
our wedding ring."*

*"I wanted to get back to the Austrian lines,
but I meant no harm."*



*"Nika, won't you
please believe me."*



*A vivid
moment of
rapturous
forgetfulness.*



*"I am not Father
Roche—I am Libert,
a spy for Austria."*



*"Paul, my beloved
where are you?"*



*Paul was very
near—joy had
come to her.*



*"Two good friends, Paul
—you and I—the score
even — at the finish."*



*"What are you doing here?" Paul demanded.
"I was captured and held a prisoner," Mary answered.*





*"Hold me close—
like you did the
day you went away."*



*Paul—capable of great
friendship and great
love.*



*"He wants me," Mary
whispered. "He will free us
all if I will go to him."*



*"Kiss me again—
hold me tight—
love me always."*

*Paul gazed down
in hatred at this
man he had once
called friend.*



*Had any other
woman ever faced
such a problem.*



"Oh, Paul—Paul
—believe in me
—let me explain."





*The entire regiment pays
its debt of gratitude to Mary.*

The priest came towards her. "Give me your secret oath," he whispered cautiously, "never to reveal what I am about to tell you."

"Oh, yes," she murmured. "I give you my word of honor." She knew that he believed her.

"I am not Father Roche—I am Libert, a spy for Austria."

Mary gave a frightened start but he gripped her shoulder sternly. "Be careful," he said.

"The lives of ten thousand Austrian soldiers depend upon my getting through the Russian lines to-night. You must give me that chance."

"I, Father?" she said. Mary seemed hypnotized by his stern gaze.

"You must," he said, "ten thousand of your countrymen. I ask it for Austria."

The flame of exultation lighted Mary's eyes, "I will go to him, Father," she said. She left the room—a pitiful, little figure.

The next morning, Lemberg again belonged to Austria. Mary, standing in the doorway of the chapel, wondered if she would see Paul—wondered if she would dare tell him. She moved toward the altar, flinging herself on her knees. She could hear the Austrian soldiers at the door but did not turn.

She felt a man's touch on her shoulder and heard him say, "Pardon, Fraulein." She dared not look up. Of all the voices in the world, it was the one she most longed to hear—and most dreaded.

He lifted her to her feet and took her in his arms.

A soldier on guard at the doorway said to his companion, "Gee—officers get all the breaks."

Mary continued to cling to Paul.

"But what are you doing here?" he asked.

"I was captured," she answered, "and held a prisoner."

Paul picked her up and carried her out of the church.

Outside the street was filled with confused groups.

Paul continued on. Suddenly he stopped and faced Nika—a prisoner now—and severely wounded. Down his face trickled a thin stream of blood.

"Nika!" Paul cried out.

Mary, startled, wrenched herself from his arms.

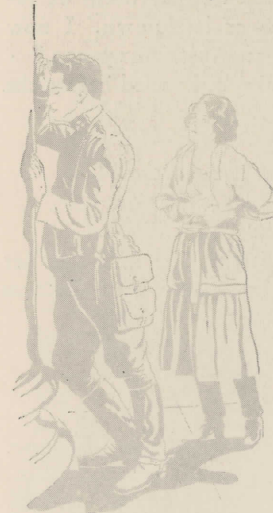
"So the gallant hero has returned," Nika said in his sarcastic voice. "Well, now you and I are even."

Mary gave a low moan.

"Ask Mary to explain," the wounded man said.

"Mary, I know it's a lie," Paul said.

He looked at Nika. The man had slid to the ground but even though he was dying, he was able to say, "Two good friends, Paul—you and I—the score even—at the finish."



Paul motioned to two soldiers. "Take that body away," and turned to Mary. "Oh, Paul, Paul," she cried, "believe in me!" Without a word, he took the wedding ring from her finger and left her. Mary wandered back to the hotel. Fight as she might, the good chances in life seemed against her.

She turned, hearing a knock at her door and opening it, she faced the Austrian spy, Libert, who had masqueraded as a priest.

"Father!" she cried.

"Yes," he answered and for a moment they looked at each other in deep silence. Then she threw herself into his arms.

"Father, Father," she sobbed.

"You and you alone," he said, "made this victory possible."

She clasped her hands despairingly.

"Victory,"—she gave a hollow laugh, "victory that has robbed me of all that makes life worth living. So you see," she added, "it was a greater sacrifice than I know how to bear."

Libert watched her for a moment and then said, "My child I am going to put you in the care of one of my officers—I want you to promise to obey him as though he were my son."

He called the officer who came in as Libert went out.

The man turned to Mary, "Please step out on the balcony," he said.

"Oh, no," she murmured, "I couldn't do that."

"Please," he urged.

She passed before him and walked to the balcony. She looked down in the square and found the General looking up at her. The officer next to her stood rigidly at attention.

Suddenly the General spoke holding Mary with his eyes.

"All great victories," he said, his voice ringing out, "are won by deeds of inspired bravery—exalted sacrifice. Many of these will never be known. I now request an army of Austrian men to ask God's blessing on an Austrian woman."

Looking up at Mary, the General himself, setting the example, kneeled before the slender girl on the balcony.

Mary gazed down on them in amazement.

"Oh, no," she murmured to the officer at her side, "I am not worthy."

Suddenly she saw Paul.

"Paul, Paul," her eyes cried to him, "won't you believe in me?"

She looked down and saw him bow his head in contrition. She held out her arms, seemingly to thank the regiment, but it was really Paul whom she was thanking.

THE END



*"To have and
to hold."*





ORMA TALMADGE has been acclaimed by many noted critics as the greatest emotional actress on the screen. From the old Vitagraph days this American girl has, with a fine artistic courage, kept faith with her public. What is she like? Those who have seen her have mentioned her youth and beauty. But who can say what she is exactly like? She is tall, she is small, she is a child, she is a woman. She is delicate and nervous. As a matter of fact, being a sensitive artist, she is whatever her part demands.

Most actors lack this wonderful adaptability. Their interpretations reveal their individuality. We see all through their impersonations and mannerisms. The great characteristic of Norma Talmadge, and one which raises her above all her contemporaries, is the manner in which she eliminates all artifice. Who will ever forget the powerful simplicity of her scene with the baby in "Secrets?" Or the scene in "The Lady," as the old innkeeper when she sees her son again after an absence of many years. And from that to "Kiki," the little gamine of sixteen, carefree, reckless youngster who broke the record of the largest theatre in the world.

As Mary Ann Wagner in "The Woman Disputed," she brings a new character and a new problem to the screen. A character stronger than she has ever played and a picture, sensational and powerful in the plot it presents.



